



Session Four: loving the **Big Picture**

In this session we will learn about the big picture of the Bible, how it all fits together, and the underlying themes that appear consistently throughout the Old and New Testaments. We'll also look at the sufficiency of Scripture, and how it is a complete revelation, not lacking in anything.

Look at the following verses. What do they tell you about the completeness of Scripture?

- Hebrews 1:1-3
- 2 Corinthians 11:1-4
- Revelation 22:18

In the Bible, God speaks about a finished work (Hebrews 1:1-3). The emphasis in the New Testament is on a work completed. Jesus is the focus of history, not the interval between two testaments. Nothing should be 'new' - see the warning against being led astray by new ideas in 2 Corinthians 11:3 - and the Bible contains a pretty serious warning against adding to it (see Revelation 22:18)!

Sometimes we might find ourselves asking: *is the Bible enough? If God is personal and relational, wouldn't he keep on speaking to us?*

Let's look at a couple verses from Hebrews to address this question. Look at Hebrews 3:7-11, and then 4:7. *What is the tense of the verb 'to say'?*

The only reason we question if the Bible is enough is because we fail to see the greatness of the culmination of God's revelation!

The sufficiency of Scripture and the closure of the canon points us to the finished work of revelation and redemption. In Christ's own words, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). Let's take a closer look at the big picture of this completed work...

Firstly, let's think more about *how* we should read the Bible. The Bible needs to be read as a book: it must be understood as a whole. Context is essential. To understand any part of the Bible properly, we must consider where it fits into the redemption plan and how it contributes to it.

What are the consequences of trying to separate the Old and New Testaments?

In a nutshell, the Old Testament is about promise and the New Testament is about fulfilment.

Have a go at explaining the basic storyline of the Bible in your own words, in terms of a beginning, a middle and an end... (Basically, just as yourselves, what's the whole point of the Bible?!)

Where do we feature in that storyline?

The Bible is about God's plan for salvation: His promise to restore His kingdom, and then the fulfilment of that promise through His Son Jesus. Vaughan Roberts, in his book '*The Big Picture*', describes the kingdom of God as the unifying theme of the Bible. This can be defined as God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing.

Let's look at the example of Abraham in Genesis 12-17 to see how this works (Genesis 12:1-3 and 17:1-8 in particular).

How would you define the people, the land and the blessing from these verses?

These passages speak of how the curse of the fall will eventually be replaced by the blessing of salvation, and how 'all peoples on earth will be blessed.' Right from the very start God's plan of salvation was universal: it encompassed all nations!

The covenant with Abraham is a promise of the kingdom of God:

- **God's people (Abraham's descendants)**
- **In God's place (the promised land)**
- **Under God's rule and therefore enjoying God's blessing. It is a promise to reverse the effects of the fall. (Everlasting covenant; everlasting covenant)**

The gospel that was first proclaimed to Abraham was partially fulfilled, in the history of Israel, in the promised land of Canaan. But that same gospel has now been finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He, and those from all nations who trust Him, are God's people; and we can look forward to enjoying the fullness of God's blessing in HEAVEN! Whoop!

Application

In small groups...

1. Praise God for the fact that He has given us a complete revelation, and has fulfilled all His promises in Jesus Christ. What a faithful God!
2. Pray that we would never view the Bible as a history book: it's LIVING and still speaks to us today! We're still living in present Bible history: we're waiting for Christ's return. We are a living part of the big picture!

For later...

Just spend some time thinking about heaven. We get to be with God! We get to experience God's fulfilled promise, or the 'happy ending': what He has promised throughout the WHOLE BIBLE culminates in us dwelling with Him in heaven. That's the fruit of all the endless toil and struggle throughout Bible history. Mind-blowing!

Make sure you leave time to pray about what you've learnt to the God who has graciously revealed Himself